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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3804

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS BEIRUT 001747

SIPDIS

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TERREP

STATE FOR DS/DSS, DS/IP/NEA, DS/IP/ITA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC LE PTER

SUBJECT: MGLE01: DISTURBANCES IN BEIRUT AND ELSEWHERE OVER
TV SHOW SATIRE

¶1. (SBU) At 2300 hrs. local on June 1, Lebanese Shi'ite Muslims rioted in Rweissat Jdeideth, West Beirut, Baalbeck, Nabatieh, Sidon and Tyre in protest of a satirical TV show, entitled "Basmat-Watan," which mocked Hizballah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. The largest number of protesters were in West Beirut, where the short-notice demonstration drew an estimated 15,000 participants.

Demonstrators in West Beirut burned tires and blocked roads leading to Beirut's Hariri International Airport.

Approximately 100 protesters in Rewessat Jdeideth, the area closest to the Embassy, and located 6 miles away, also set tires on fire. No arrests were made, but one demonstrator was shot by one of Prime Minister Siniora's security officers when a crowd of demonstrators attempted to take the route leading to the Prime Minister's Office. There were no other reported injuries.

¶2. (SBU) The weekly 30-minute television show "Basmat-Watan" has a reputation for making fun of Lebanon's political leaders. This was the first time that Hizballah's Nasrallah had been caricatured. Nasrallah, during a telephone interview, thanked the protesters for their support but urged them to stop rioting and pledged to resolve the issue with the appropriate officials. Shortly thereafter, at 0100 hrs. local on June 2, the rioters stopped protesting and headed home.

¶3. (SBU) All Embassy personnel were immediately accounted for. The Internal Security Forces (ISF) and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) increased security patrols around the Embassy as a precautionary measure. At no time did the RSO receive information that the protesters were en route to or in the vicinity of the Embassy. One scheduled off-compound move from the Embassy to the Beirut airport was canceled due to street closures surrounding the airport.

¶4. (SBU) Currently no additional adjustments have been made to our already strict security measures. The RSO will continue to monitor events and adjust security as necessary.

FELTMAN